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LET THE GABBLERS GABBLE!

Or,
How and Why You Should Ignore Marxist Intellectuals

ORGONAUTS

DIALECTICAL MATERIALIST SCIENCE AGAINST INTELLECTUAL
DILETTANTISM IN THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT :
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In recent months the battle over the utilisation of psychology has once again broken out in many of the organisations of the working-class movement. I say 'once again', for discussion about the necessity of integrating correct psychological insights and procedures into the socialist movement has been going on for some ten or twelve years. My investigations into sexuality and my specialist psychotherapeutic work have been invoked from many angles, although I have not directly contributed towards this discussion in the last few years. The nature of the debate as carried on in the last few months obliges me to dissociate myself from the various views and positions expressed in the interests of the single correct and fruitful integration of psychology into the struggle of dialectical materialist theory and practice.

Several articles have appeared recently which, under the title of 'Psychoanalysis', have purported to represent my views. I should like to point out categorically that I am not a psychoanalyst and avoid representing my views as coming under its auspices. I was indeed active in the psychoanalytic movement for fifteen years, but my theories of sexual economy and political psychology are not a continuation of Freud's instinctual theory and psychology of mass behaviour. I am concerned to leave no doubt that, in the course of years of practical work in the revolutionary movement, my views have developed as a critical reaction to freudian theory. Psychoanalysis is a psychology of unconscious mental life. My theory does not constitute a psychology, but a dialectical materialist science of sexuality ('sex-economy'). It studies sexuality inclusive of its operation in the psychological sphere ('dialectical materialist psychology'). A few examples should demonstrate how opposed psychoanalysis and sex-economy are. Freudian cultural theory maintains that sexual enjoyment must for the most part be renounced 'in the interests of civilisation', which for Freud explicitly signifies bourgeois civilisation. My research in the fields of political sociology and

sexual medicine led me to precisely the opposite view - that in patriarchal, capitalist society the sexual satisfaction of the masses and the development of bourgeois civilisation are indeed opposed; that the repression of the sexual satisfaction of the masses stands in the service of their ideological subjection; that the socialist development of society nevertheless overcomes this and changes healthy sexual enjoyment of life into a fundamental progressive factor. In Freud, the family is considered to be unchangeably biologically determined; for sex-economy, in accordance with Engels and Morgan, the family in its present form is regarded as an institution which arose at one time and which will necessarily so alter in form in the future that one will no longer be able to speak of 'family'. In Freud, human suffering arises from an instinct, the so-called death instinct. My whole dialectical materialist theory of human instincts started precisely with the refutation of the Freudian death instinct theory and led to the proof that mental suffering is rooted in concrete institutions of patriarchal capitalist society. I would emphasise explicitly that Freud and his whole school reject my views and will have nothing to do with me. The development of these views, which I admittedly originally represented as appertaining to psychoanalysis, led to my exclusion from the IPA (International Psychoanalytic Association). My colleagues and pupils are organised around the "International Institute for Sex-Economic Life Research".

It is superfluous to represent to me the progressive scientific advances made by Freud. I know of nobody in the IPA who appreciated them better than myself or who was more ready than me to stand up for them.

From the start there have been two camps involved in the discussion over the position of the movement towards psychology. One maintains that psychology has no place in the movement, which has only to deal with socio-economic factors. The other holds that the movement has to resolve, theoretically and practically, all the problems occurring in the life of society and of the normal individual, and cannot master essential questions without psychology. The dispute is usually carried on in the abstract, because the fundamental question is not put: which psychology is to be rejected and which is necessary? Furthermore: how is psychology to be adopted?

The revolutionary movement must approach orthodox psychological systems with great caution, since official psychology has, in our present society, principally the function of concealing and diverting attention from the economic basis of class society and the class struggle. One cannot mix "a little psychology" with "a little economics": one cannot take up any psychology; one must, in short, know precisely what kind of psychological work is indispensable. It is usually the opponents of psychology in the revolutionary movement who introduce the most conservative psychological views into the

socialist movement. In Freud, the instincts, which are considered eternal and immutable, determine the evolution of society. This view is incompatible with a dialectical materialist, revolutionary orientation. The dynamics of human instincts are themselves dependent upon the conditions of existence. Psychology can only be integrated into the revolutionary movement in one single way if it is not to cause harm but to be of use. Marx and Engels demonstrated that the social relations of men and in particular their economic relations, are the basis on which all else is built - morality, law, state institutions, etc. But that does not explain how this economic basis works itself out in people's instinctual structure. Dialectical materialist psychology therefore has the task of investigating and grasping practically how the social existence of men influences the fundamental biological instincts of hunger and sexuality, and how in the different classes the concrete living individual develops out of this and not the abstract 'human nature' the bourgeois talk about.

Psychology cannot therefore explain why workers are striking at present in America, but it is indispensable to the understanding of why workers do not strike in an economic situation which rationally requires it, of what inhibitions are operating. Psychological inhibitions against striking themselves originate in external social influences from early childhood in the family, which become implanted in the worker with the aid of unconscious infantile anxiety. Dialectical materialist psychology is indispensable in the revolutionary movement. It must absorb from bourgeois science what has been demonstrated as factual, eg. Freud's proof that the infant is a sexual being and that there exists an unconscious mental life, etc. But one must recognise that all bourgeois investigation has to turn aside at a certain point, because it cannot or will not see the consequences of what it has proven. Psychoanalysis in its present form is injurious to the revolutionary movement. By proclaiming psychoanalysis as a scientific aid one impedes the fight for the adoption of revolutionary psychological work in the proletarian movement; for opponents can easily trot out some article from the current psychoanalytic journal and rightfully dispose thinking socialists against it. But one will be throwing the baby out with the bathwater and merely talking about psychology if one has not in the course of years of specialised practical work learnt to distinguish what is correct in the psychological knowledge available to us, what can be adopted and what must be rejected. One must at the same time be active in the working class movement in order to judge accurately how this is to be absorbed and what must be done. It is precisely the most sterile 'critics' of views of mine which they have not read who stand for the most obsolete bourgeois psychology in the revolutionary movement. This brings me to the necessity of dissociating myself from another group.

There are intellectuals in the revolutionary movement who rightly feel that there is a great gap in mass propaganda and in the field of positive, fruitful, constructive cultural work. They rightly say that there can be no cultural work without psychology, for 'culture' is concerned with human character structure, human thinking and feeling. Hitler moreover has thrashed the economists with his brilliant psychological intuitive sense of the pathological infantility of the masses' feelings. All this is the field of factual psychology; and what do a lot of these intellectuals do? They think that on the basis of this correct insight they can arrogate to themselves the right to rebuke and pour scorn on the cadres of the revolutionary movement who, having no psychological training, are in no position to resolve important questions. I should like to emphasise what my own practical experience in the movement has taught me - that one must be able to prove to one's own satisfaction and then to others that one can oneself do better than those one is criticising; only then does one have the right to rebuke those opposed to cultural work. One must thus be familiar with the concrete problems of the movement; one must oneself have experienced the difficulties particularly liable to confront such work in a world situation such as that now prevailing; and finally one must have felt and experienced the entire complexity of the problems and the incompleteness of our grasp of their solutions, one must have a feasible practical answer to the questions before getting up on one's critical high horse. It isn't enough to be right intuitively and 'in principle'.

There is a third group of intellectuals and experts from whom I would like to dissociate myself on principle. Many of them agree with the facts of sexual life and its relation to psychological structure and social ideology (such as religion) as I have previously established them. They discover that these problems stimulate, interest and activate people universally. It is then very easy to popularise the mechanisms of sexuality and its disorders, providing one omits both to raise those socio-political consequences of such facts which I have demonstrated precisely and in detail at many points in my work, and to deal with the problems thrown up in the socialist movement. You have merely to present the matter in a completely simplistic and facile manner, pass over the difficulties and the necessary social preconditions (for progress), avoid drawing the consequences and acting upon them, and you perform precisely the opposite of what you set out to achieve. For example: a writer of this kind could write a wonderful novel about the hunger of a Chinese coolie, and evoke his death by starvation so grippingly that ten editions of the book might be sold in a fortnight. Imagine that the author did nothing other than this; he would merely have called forth and satisfied the sadistic fantasies of his readers - and he would have done nothing for the problem of the coolie whose part he had so

warmly taken in his book. For the book would not have reached the coolie, and, if it had, he would, if he had not forgotten how to think, immediately ask the following questions:-

- 1) What is to be done here and now, in order to reduce the suffering as far as possible?
- 2) How can this suffering be done away with radically and fundamentally?

3) How, author, do you propose to show us what to do?
One must above all help the coolie to become the author of his own affairs!

Writing books about need is easy, but the fight to abolish need is quite another matter. It is especially easy in the field of sexual science to pass progressive insights off on the public; but passing revolutionary insights off in this way is very dangerous, one never knows when one is being infected by the enemy who are also working and fighting. It is the origin and essence of barren reformism to set out to defeat the opponent with a good weapon and to end up being co-opted by him.

In concrete terms: it is very easy to be in favour of the sexual pleasure attainable at present - even the most extreme reactionary will be in agreement with that; but contributing in practical terms to the creation of the social and educational conditions which would in practice facilitate the full-blooded enjoyment of life for the mass of humanity leads directly to a confrontation with all the forces of conservatism, including those in the revolutionary movement. To write without indicating the consequences and difficulties, or without being prepared to take up the fight oneself is to practise the most deceitful dilettantism towards those for whom one believes oneself to be writing.

The working class movement, as represented by its party political organisations, has not yet adopted into its programme the overcoming of sexual debility - indeed, it is on many points not merely unclear about the causes of this need and about the aims and means of change, but is even on occasion hostile to sex-political theory. 99% of bourgeois literature, art, films, etc. exists because the problem of sexual life has not been solved. Ignoring those trashy novels which speculate on the most brutal and morbid fantasies of the unsatisfied individual, we keep finding good works in bourgeois literature, setting off in the right direction, that is to say, demanding a solution to the problem: but they always break off because the connections between individual human questions and general social, political ones are beyond them. The writers do not do this because they are bad men, but simply through ignorance. They can then easily slip into an anti-social, indeed, reactionary current. It is one of the principal tasks of the working class movement not simply to be scornful or stand aside, but to take up the questions the bourgeoisie

has brought up and make them comprehensible to people in the mass so as to enable them to take the problems of their own lives into their own hands and solve them practically. We cannot expect some new Jesus to come down from Heaven to solve on behalf of humanity so central a problem of life as sexuality and culture. There can be no socialism without the human masses consciously mastering their life.

Good, well-known, progressive - indeed, in many ways revolutionary-minded - writers thus take these problems up, but they do it incompletely, choose bad examples and problems to which the mass of the working people are indifferent: they bathe in their own aestheticism, drawn from some obsolete or imagined social situation, and thus they do not acquire any social perspective, they write 'individualistically', or rather, in empty space. But all this does not negate the direction which they have attempted to take or the problem which they have taken up, however awkwardly or wrongly: these belong to the fundamental problematic of human social life.

And what are our "principled radicals" doing, our raging marxists, if we may so call them? They declare the entire work of these honest writers and scientists who are striving towards a socialist viewpoint to be reactionary, superfluous and alien to the revolutionary movement and, with that, full stop. They make an antithesis between the problematic of sexuality and that of socialism. They think that they must defend the working class movement against 'parasites and camp-followers'. Such "principled marxists", with whom I am very well acquainted indeed, are in fact serious sexual neurotic cases who have simply never made the effort to immerse themselves in life itself in this respect and see this life for once without any theories. Their socialist radicalism is the outlet for a pathological rebellion against deep-seated attachments to the bourgeois family situation and bourgeois ideology: they are tortured by feelings of envy and inferiority towards the bourgeois specialist.

This is so powerful within them that they continually have to prove how 'radical', how 'socialist' they are, and just how 'marxist'. Being neurotics, they are not in a position to talk and think calmly and factually about the problem of sexuality. It is the motive of reactionary antisexualism which determines their approach to these questions. They don't have any comprehension of the fact that the decline of sexual life in our present society fundamentally concerns and oppresses the masses, as anybody can prove to himself by looking at the literature they prefer to read. But they are furious Marxists on principle! They act and write from bad motives: not in order to find a better solution to a major problem than the bourgeois are capable of: not in order to be of real assistance to the masses on this point: but because professionally and technically they have failed in life and think they can conceal their professional and technical

incompetence behind radical clamour in the revolutionary movement. These ultra-radical loudmouths are far more dangerous to the movement than open reactionaries. They represent a chronic condition of dry intellectualism disguised as socialism, of dogmatism, and, what is worse, they make marxism - a living perspective and theory - unpopular and incomprehensible for the masses: for the method of marxism is the living contemplation of life and not merely economic doctrine, not merely the technique of negotiating wage-rates.

To an increasing extent lately there have come attacks, concealed rather than open, from individuals belonging to the working-class parties upon the renewal and stimulation of socialist work on all fronts. My dialectical materialist research into sexuality has been associated with the cultural discussion, in most cases without a word of my work having been read or my activity in the German and Austrian proletarian movement being considered. They present me as an "intellectual", as an "outsider" long since split off from the revolutionary movement: I was in fact expelled from the KPD only in the autumn of 1933, because they didn't dare do so while I was active among young people, try as they might. My position on the problem of intellectuals is as follows:-

It has already been demonstrated, particularly in the Russian Revolution, that the proletariat cannot reap a lasting victory without taking over, elaborating and correcting the knowledge accumulated by the bourgeoisie. Now the intellectuals are the executors with whom this knowledge is lodged, and as executors they are in most cases unreliable from the standpoint of the revolutionary movement. Specialised practical knowledge, however, rests in their hands, be they engineers, doctors, architects, sexologists, psychologists, educationists, etc.. Thanks to their social situation, they have mastered intellectual techniques: they are the most important of the bourgeoisie's technical and cultural troops. They have mastered a discipline which is in most cases beyond the grasp of our principled marxist windbags. Intellectuals often have a professional technical interest in the exposition and solution of technical problems which is quite independent of self-interest. But at the same time they have traits which invalidate these indispensable positive characteristics. They mostly avoid identifying with the working mass of the population from motives of intellectual arrogance, fear, and vanity. One must realise that, insofar as they have any acquaintance with economics (which is not always the case), the great majority of intellectuals experience tremendous feelings of guilt towards the poor. They adopt attitudes of intellectual arrogance or ultra-radicalism, most of the time only verbally, in self-protection: this has its counterpart in the worker's hatred for the intellectual, arising from his feeling of inferiority. Intellectual specialists share indirectly in the profits of Capital: they refuse to accept this fact and

conceal it with the ideology of 'intellectual neutrality'. When, for sentimental reasons or from some spark of conviction, an intellectual joins up with the working class movement, he first presents himself as someone who knows better. He feels himself to be above the working masses and their organisational structures on account of his intellectual faculties. He considers himself too good for the petty tasks of political activity; in reality he feels embarrassed in the face of workers and of his colleagues. Originating in most cases from the middle class, he feels aversion to the 'primitive', 'uncultivated' ways of the life of the proletariat. This often does not prevent him longing wistfully for a return to nature. He is usually more disturbed sexually than the average worker. Among the masses of the working population, sexual questions are put more primitively, more directly; he finds that 'too coarse'. If he doesn't soon put space between himself and the revolutionary movement, he will probably end up spouting the most refined cultural balderdash within the movement.

These are the essential contradictions of the average serious intellectual specialist. In my opinion, the workers' organisations' treatment of the intellectuals must go further than ignoring this conflict or seeking to solve it with insults, for they must perform a necessary task in this field - namely, convince the intellectual in thought and feeling that he must go beyond the limits imposed on his specialist study within the bourgeois system and attach himself to the socialist movement. The movement has to give practical answers not merely to economic problems, but to all those problems facing society. To a large extent it lacks the necessary knowledge and technical competence, so that it needs the intellectuals. The intellectuals for their part must be taught that scornful criticism and knowing better will not do when they have not integrated their insights into the general framework by dint of perseverance and strenuous work in the struggle. The intellectual must help find practical solutions to the problems facing the movement, not as the servant of the working class, but in his own right as an expert in his field. Only in this way can he assure himself that the dialectical materialist socialist world-view is competent to meet the demands of the intellect. But this it will only be when we behave as befits socialists and avoid appealing to his good socialist sentiments. As a socialist, one must possess real, profound, serious specialised knowledge; appeals to the proper sentiments do not suffice. Only when a long period of active collaboration has shown him that ignorance, indeed, conservatism confronts him within the movement over many questions - only when in the face of this he feels confidence in himself as a progressive socialist and specialist has he the right, and not merely the right but the duty, to take up the struggle to establish his firmly-based views.

My work within the socialist movement basically consists

in investigating the problem of sexuality from the standpoint of dialectical materialism and in learning from the failure of the Russian sexual revolution how the problem of sexuality can be resolved positively and practically on the mass scale. I am ready and determined to take up the struggle for the recognition of my scientific work and to carry it through to its conclusion. I decline, however, to bear the responsibility for views and opinions which I neither hold nor am prepared to countenance.

How, then, should we react to attacks from our 'principled politicians'?

I should like to clarify by means of a single example what methods these hacks use to sow confusion and conceal their own scientific impotence. In the 'Mass Psychology of Fascism' and in my work on the utilisation of psychology by historical materialism, I attempted to show that the actions of working people in attempting to overcome conditions of immediately felt need are entirely rational, ie. purposeful and comprehensible without further psychological explanation; but that psychological attitudes affirming and tolerating oppression cannot directly be explained from the given economic situation of those concerned, since they in fact contradict this economic situation. The inhibition of the need to rebel and conquer the right to life corresponds to inner psychological blocks. But these psychological inhibitions themselves, such as submission to authority and feelings of helplessness have in their turn arisen due to prior social conditioning. In this way early authoritarian upbringing in the family leads to psychological failure in a subsequent situation of actual need in which struggle for the right to live would be the only reasonable course of action. And what do the ignoramuses make of this? My view is reported as follows: "When workers strike because their wages are too low or when the starving steal, they are behaving rationally, ie., as befits their objective situation. Under these circumstances their actions can be explained through socio-economic causes." That is accurate enough; but now the reviewer begins to reel: "... But if they stop striking or stealing..." - now he's rolled the thief and the worker into one and so influenced the worker reading it against the whole formulation. It goes on: "... or if the oppressed don't immediately go out onto the streets and build barricades..." - which is a lie, I never wrote that - "... in other words, if they behave irrationally, human reason has until now remained powerless to comprehend their actions, and it is only Dr. Reich who has given humanity the key to these enigmatic processes."

How, then, do these people work? They twist words, rip statements out of their context instead of discussing the problem as a whole, as it has been presented; and they don't answer a single practical problem of life or offer any other solution to stand against the one they have misrepresented. And then these swindlers dare to

write the following: "... Dr. Reich has to stoop to clumsy, idiotic conjuring tricks like this to pass off his quack medicine. Only an incorrigible metaphysician or some kind of charlatan could distinguish between rational and irrational behaviour in men." I advise all our sympathisers and all those who have understood what we are attempting and how we go about matters not to enter into any kind of discussion with this intellectual riff-raff. We must proceed unflinchingly on the path of our honest efforts to reveal underlying connections. If we make any reply to these people or enter into debate with them, we concede to them in principle the right to discuss our work and give even our readers cause to doubt whether these hacks aren't acting upon honourable motives and whether they don't after all bring some basic knowledge to bear on our work in their criticisms.

We have no choice but to communicate to other working people those findings which we, as ordinary workers ourselves, have so arduously attained, in the same way that we ourselves have adopted from others' work findings and suggestions useful in practice. We shall not let ourselves be disturbed in this work by anyone, whoever he may be or however he may appear in the eyes of the credulous. I wish to leave no doubt that we shall find ways and means of evading the fate of wretched martyrs defeated by philistinism! Let the gabblers gabble! They have nothing to say! The more they gabble, the better we shall be heard. Refuse any discussion with them except publicly before working people. Ask them precise concrete questions so that they cannot in any way avoid saying, for example, just what they themselves have practically accomplished to master the confusion of our times. Demonstrate to them that they are saying precisely what the most extreme fascists and priests maintain. Ask them - what they have read in Marx and how they have understood it - ask them - what they have achieved in the field of marxist economics beside sheer speculation - ask them - if they have ever talked to a working woman about the worries of looking after children during work - or - how a middle class woman can cope with an obstinate, noisy kid hanging about her all the time - or - what to do with children who wet their beds or get on badly at school.

Ask them what economic and social arrangements are necessary for the solution of these problems of the everyday life of the masses, and ask them that exclusively in the presence of ordinary, unpolitical people weighed down by such worries. Don't defend yourselves against them; don't treat them as if they were the legitimate spokesmen and defenders of the socialist viewpoint! Attack them - turn the bright, clear flame of straightforward human thinking onto these leeches of the socialist struggle. Put it to them in front of thousands of factory and office workers how 18 year old boys and girls are to overcome the problem of making love without being

disturbed. Confront them directly with the question as to what they have seriously achieved towards resolving even one of the crushing problems of our world situation: they won't have an answer. They haven't even asked themselves the question. They infect the air of the political struggle, they further confuse minds that are already confused. They are bursting with vanity, envy and the sense of their own incompetence. Just let them answer one single human question, such as this: how are women to achieve sexual satisfaction without getting pregnant every time? How do they intend the young to occupy their leisure-time? How will work be rendered enjoyable and spare time satisfying for the mass of workers? How do they explain the mystique of National Socialism and the power of this mystique, which has swept Europe in a flood of fascism? You'll reveal nothing but straw. Don't get into learned discussions with them about the class struggle and the principles of the party, but challenge them openly and in a way everybody can understand! How will it be possible to build homes for millions of people so that the children are not wrecked by the grown-ups' conflicts and so that couples don't destroy each other with their simultaneous love and hatred; to arrange that boys and girls don't hang about street corners in boredom and frustration; how will they stop women dying in their tens of thousands from illegal abortions; how will they prevent it from happening that millions of men who don't want a war nevertheless go to war; that millions of workers and people engaged in creative production want peace and yet cannot come together to fight for the pleasure of all in life; that men resort to theft and fraud when they don't dispose of the fruits of their own labours!

At every opportunity subject them to question and answer in public on concrete matters such as these, let them have the scorn they deserve when it is demonstrated that they've been chattering about marxism and socialism without comprehending in real life what a prostitute experiences daily through her own body.

Trust your own living instinct as to what is right and what mistaken, what is human and what inhuman, what is slavery and what liberation. Don't let yourselves be brow-beaten and talked down. The spontaneous thought of a completely uneducated working girl is more important, more productive, more valid and more correct than a thousand of the dictums of theologians like these!

Let us sum up the task of the socialist intellectual working in a specialised field:

One must be capable of helping the average, unpolitical teacher with his particular difficulties; of showing him that he comes into conflict with his real duty if he wants to be both friend to his pupils and executive agent of authoritarian bourgeois educational discipline. One must understand at what points and for what reasons contemporary biological research falls short, and medical study fails

to achieve its task. One must be able to give the nursery teacher practical assistance in comprehending and overcoming the conflicts of infants. One must even go so far as to make clear to the honest-minded priest why, with the best subjective will in the world, he can achieve so little with his charity, where and how he ultimately helps preserve suffering. One must have the courage to respect the conviction even of our present political opponents where they belong to the masses, but also to show them why their views cannot lead to the goals they themselves aspire to. One must help every youth-group leader understand the conflicts of the adolescent both from the personal and the social side. On the so-called cultural front one must have profound scientific, educational, medical, etc. knowledge, critical knowledge and above all better knowledge than the average bourgeois specialist. It is very easy to maintain the millions in ignorance and misery by dictatorial methods; but to bring millions to think, judge and act autonomously unequivocally demands that a brutal stop be put to the gabble about the "new socialist culture". It demands honesty, competence, courage, breadth of understanding, simplicity, versatility and thoroughness.

As far as our own work is concerned, we wish to make one thing clear: if it was demanded of us that we take the leadership of large organisations in all fields, we should refuse, because we are not able to do so. But we know exactly in what fields we are expert and where and how we could do better than bourgeois reformers and scientists. Little as we let ourselves fall prey to political fantasies, we must nevertheless also know precisely for what we can, and should, take over responsibility at the present time.

Next, we want to be left in peace to carry on with our difficult work of research and therapy!

Our views and intentions are so unambiguously expounded in our various publications and our educational goals in relation to adolescents and children as well as our general conceptions of sexual hygiene so firmly outlined that no one will be able to say at a future date that he "didn't know". We will under no circumstances allow ourselves to be disturbed in our work and in the revelation of what we know by anybody, no matter who. We will not give in to the narrowmindedness and abjection which at present rule the world, and we will dissociate ourselves from anyone too weak to resist. To say this in the face of a total fascisation of the world is to rest upon the conviction that somewhere on this earth there may still be a place where honest work can be carried out. We shall not fail to make the connection with the great upheaval that will resolve the present state of confusion.